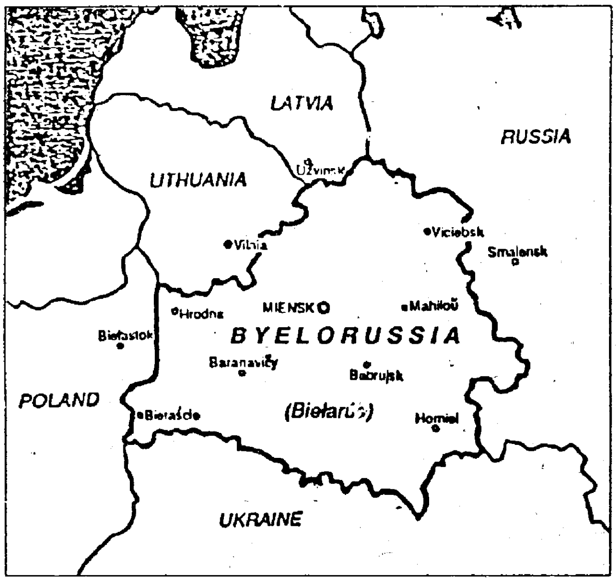
Annual
Subscription:
$12.00

BYELORUSSIAN
(Bielarusian)
REVIEW

Quarterly Information Bulletin
Published by Byelorussian-American Association, Inc. (California)
Managing Editor: P.O. Box 10353, Torrance, CA 90505

Vol. 2, No. 3 Fall 1990



Boundaries shown on this map are those of the Byelorussian Soviet republic, and do not include the entire Byelorussian ethnic territory (parts of which are under administration of neighboring states).

EDITOR'S DESK

New Section — One of our readers wrote suggesting that we cover more important events from Byelorussia's history. We liked the idea so much that we have added a new section, "FRAGMENTS FROM BYELORUSSIAN HISTORY." In this issue, we feature Dr. Francišak Skaryna as his 500th birthday is widely observed this year. In the future, we will be looking for events significant at the time of BR's publication.

Byelorussian Convention — As you certainly will notice, we have devoted a lot of space for the coverage of the 19th Convention of Byelorussians from North America. And for good reason. We were there — that is George and myself — and took part in various meetings and discussions, spoke with our political leaders from abroad, interviewed Mr. Hrušavy for BR, and had a good time. The mood was contagious, the patriotic feeling sky high. President Bush graced the gathering with his written greetings and Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar eloquently spoke about Byelorussia's past and present, with hope for its better future. The performing groups and individuals from Byelorussia, the Bielastok region, and our own country , were superb and the songs, especially the patriotic ones, brought tears to our eyes. We heard some good words about BR from the guests abroad — and our own people — and gained a few new admirers.

Byelorussian Sovereignty — As promised, we have included extensive discussion on this subject in our "FEATURES" section. The situation with "sovereignty" is still murky — it's touch and go. The Union Treaty looks like a sovereignty killer — as it was intended to be. We have not been able to find anything of substance on this subject in Western publications as this does not appear to make news in the West any more. We are, therefore, especially grateful to Mr. Hienadź Hrušavy, People's Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament and a Byelorussian Popular Front activist, who happened to be in the United States at the right time and was gracious enough to accomodate a live — and lively — interview with us.

Soviet Mail Delivery — We have been receiving complaints from the Soviet Union of poor, or no delivery at all of BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW to our known and potential readers in Byelorussia. We don't understand the reason.To make it easier for the Soviet mailman, we make out addresses in Cyrillic and follow the Soviet format, and send all issues to Byelorussia by air mail. It takes about two weeks for air mail from Byelorussia to arrive here. We assume it should take about the same time for our mail to get there. But some readers wrote that it took several months, and others that they never got the issues. Some of the **regular mail** we receive from Byelorussia travels from three to four months. We can only say that perestroika has not yet arrived at the Soviet postal system.

BR Subscription — This is our last appeal to those who have not paid for the 1990 subscription, which includes issues Vol. 2, No. 1 and up. We work for free but have to pay our bills to those who don't: the commercial printer and the post office to name a couple. Your support would be appreciated!

Year-End Wishes — Our next issue will appear at the end of February. So we take this opportunity to wish all of you, our readers, a

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
Вясёлых Калядаў і Шчасьлівага Новага Году!

Joe Price
Editor

■

FEATURES

BYELORUSSIA'S DECLARATION OF SOVEREIGNTY: ITS MEANING

by Art Turevich

In our last issue (Volume 2, No. 2), we mentioned the key points included in the July 27 declaration of Byelorussian sovereignty and described the events leading to the declaration. At the time we did not have enough information to make any worthwhile comment on its meaning and implications, except to promise to cover it in this issue. We are pleased this time to be able to share with you comments by some prominent Byelorussian leaders. Comments by Hienadź Hrušavy, People's Deputy to the Byelorussian Supreme Soviet (parliament) and chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front's "Children of Chernobyl" Committee, have been excerpted from an interview by Kathleen Mihalisko (Radio Liberty, August 16, 1990). Comments by other Byelorussian leaders have been derived from Byelorussian publications.

The declaration of Byelorussia's sovereignty was approved July 27 by a Byelorussian parliament vote of 230 to 0, with 120 delegates reported absent. The declaration said that the Byelorussian people have the right to control the republic's national resources, create its own national bank, have its own financial system, even its own currency, maintain its own independent judicial system, conduct independent foreign relations, set up its own armed and security forces, and declare itself a neutral state.

When it came to the last item, a provision saying that "The Byelorussian SSR proposes to enter urgently into negotiations of a Treaty of Union of sovereign socialist states," which was approved by a majority of votes, the Byelorussian Popular Front deputies got up and walked out of the parliament. A few days later, Zianon Paźniak, People's Deputy of the Byelorussian parliament and chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front, declared (*Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, July 29, 1990) that "the Supreme Soviet passed a declaration of independence that will remain an empty piece of paper." Hrušavy agrees. He says: "I agree that for now the declaration is little more than a verbal, paper expression of our nation's striving for sovereignty. The practical means to enforce it don't yet exist."

Name of the Country

Hrušavy says that the opposition "fought over every article." For example, it objected to the phrase "the people of the Byelorussian SSR," reasoning that "soviet socialist" predetermines the political system whereas "Byelorussia could be a soviet or a democratic republic, a monarchy or a dictatorship ... Social and state formations change, but the people remain. There is a people of Byelorussia."

Sovereignty: New or Renewed

Regarding the phrase "proclaim our sovereignty," Hrušavy says that the democratic bloc argued for using the word "assert" or "affirm" rather than "proclaim" to signify that Byelorussia had its statehood in the past during certain periods in history. This would have meant, for example, that "we recognize the Byelorussian National Republic of 1918" which "was non-socialist as well as independent." ... [T]he present declaration says that Byelorussia is a sovereign but necessarily socialist republic. This is nonsense..."

Hrušavy emphasized that the Popular Front bloc in the parliament presented its own version of the declaration of Byelorussian sovereignty. It differed from the final document passed on July 27 in that it did not include a provision on the Union Treaty and "... it recognized the future sovereign state as the successor to the democratic state that existed in 1918. That is, the political structures that we now have are regarded, at best, as belonging to a period of transition to full sovereignty. ... If we proclaim sovereignty but leave the old structures in place, then we risk negating that sovereignty. For that reason, the Byelorussian Popular Front considers it essential to create fundamentally new political structures. The first goal we laid out in our version of the declaration was to assign the Supreme Soviet with the powers necessary to take us out of the transition period. The present Supreme Soviet is not capable of carrying out such a program. It can only lay some of the groundwork, by which I mean making preparations for democratic elections to an all-Byelorussia Sojm [parliament]. An all-Byelorussia Sojm, having no relation to the old political structures and ideology, would then be able to fulfill the demands set out in the declaration."

Own Armed Forces

With the regard to the provision on the armed forces, Hrušavy responded that "First, about 40% of all nuclear missile installations in the European part of the USSR are located on Byelorussian territory. ...Second, Eastern Europe is liberating itself from Soviet dictatorship and, consequently, of Soviet troops. Where will all those troops move? ... Byelorussia and Ukraine. ...It's the kind of strike force that could put an end to any sovereignty. ... These tens and hundreds of thousands of soldiers will now be in Byelorussia, and ... they become a threat to political sovereignty. Moreover, they'll use up an enormous amount of resources that we need to save people from the consequences of Chernobyl. ... So for us... We want to have our own army. It is a matter of survival."

The Way the Declaration Came About

The declaration, which was unanimously approved by a very conservative parliament, caught many by surprise. Hrušavy said that when the parliament first convened on May 15, the democratic bloc representatives tried, unsuccessfully, to include on the session's agenda the question of sovereignty. At that time, the majority of deputies was not even prepared to discuss sovereignty, much less approve it. The parliament voted to keep the item off the agenda. Two months later, all of a sudden, the declaration was passed. How come? Hrušavy feels that "This is an action that has been directed and manipulated by someone." After Russia declared its sovereignty, the Byelorussian parliament called a break. Byelorussian Supreme Soviet Chairman Dziemianciej went to Moscow and when he returned on June 19, he brought with him an already prepared text. Not until his return did he reveal the document's existence.

"So, we were presented with an already prepared text. And, to the disgrace of the entire Supreme Soviet, to the disgrace of the Byelorussian people, rather than show the declaration first to us, the people who will build their sovereignty on it, the text was taken [to Moscow], where it was approved. For that reason, the sovereignty we achieve may be far from complete, far from real, far from genuine."

Advantages from the Sovereignty Declaration

Hrušavy sees some advantages in having the declaration passed. "First, it destroys the main ideological myth. ...It is the myth that precisely this Soviet Union, with its socialist, communist, Marxist-Leninist ideological basis, with its superior and most humane economic system, only it can lead all of us — Kazakhs, Byelorussians, Turkmen, Ukrainians — to the happy future. ... [T]he very existence of Byelorussia's declaration serves as political enlightenment, it steers us in entirely new directions, toward new values ... . [I]t jolts the psychological narrow-mindedness and conservatism that exists at the subconscious level."

Other Leaders' Comments

In an interview on the issue of sovereignty, reported by *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* (July 12, 1990), Mr. Dziemianciej said he has always been a supporter of sovereignty but voted against including the item on the session's agenda because he, as a responsible politician, chose to wait until the pace of political reforms was at a point as to make sovereignty a realizable goal. Prior to his going to Moscow to review the text of the declaration, Dziemianciej had usually been very hostile in his characterization of the Popular Front. He came back from Moscow a changed man, even making appreciative comments about the Byelorussian Popular Front's contribution to the parliamentary process.

Zianon Paźniak, People's Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament and chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front, said in an interview with *Litaratura i Mastactva* (August 10, 1990): "As of right now, the declaration is an empty paper, no more." Paźniak credited the Byelorussian Popular Front with a valuable contribution to drafting the declaration. He said that "... thanks to the work of our deputies, [the declaration document] reflects 95 percent of the Byelorussian Popular Front's ideas laid down a year and a half ago."

Vasil Bykaŭ, People's Deputy to the Soviet Union's parliament and acclaimed Byelorussian writer, commented along the same lines. In an interview with *Litaratura i Mastactva* (August 3, 1990), he said: "I take this declaration calmly. The adoption (or non-adoption) is, in all truth, not going to change anything in the life of the republic, so the value of the declaration is purely theoretical. It is, of course, nice, that our parliament took such a step, certainly super-radical in its own mind." Bykaŭ said that in the parliament's hall, when the declaration was going through the adoption, "there was a mood that usually prevails at funerals, as all this was made against the will of the majority, with some delegates of the Party visibly distressed. The radical delegates fought with abandon for each word, while the conservatives remained passive, feeling their strength in something else — in the voting procedure. This was all that ultimately was decisive."

Bykaŭ did not see much connection between the words and the real world. He said, "It is highly unrealistic to expect that this high-sounding declaration will be fulfilled. It is hard to believe, to say the least, that with such a clearly conservative Communist Party of Byelorussia and the Soviets it will be achieved in the near future."

Uladzimier Hrybanaŭ, a Byelorussian parliament's People's Deputy and its secretary on national policy and international relations, wrote in *Znamya Yunosti* (September 12, 1990) about discussions going on in Moscow on the Union Treaty on behalf of Byelorussia. He listed 14 items included in the draft Treaty in which, he says, "Byelorussia ... deprives itself of sovereignty. The draft, in almost every line, every word, contradicts the letter and spirit of our declaration (on sovereignty) adopted July 27 ... ." Hrybanaŭ claimed that even the parliament's Presidium was unaware of the draft and urged that the parliament call a special session to review the draft, and that the question of the Treaty be discussed among the republics themselves, with the Center participating, and that Byelorussian representatives take their guidance "only from the provisions of the declaration (on sovereignty)."

Our Own View

So, what's the real McCoy? — we may ask again. From what our distinguished commentators say, the picture is not very encouraging. But it is a beginning. Of course, a declaration of sovereignty is not exactly the same as a declaration of independence, although some people would argue about that. However, it is a step forward. The declaration has all the necessary ingredients — on paper, that is — to lead Byelorussia to a sovereign and independent statehood. But so did Stalin's constitution, which, they say, was the most liberal in the whole world. The problem is with implementation. And the implementation means people, the people in charge and the people on the street. It will take a lot of *good* people to make the declaration work. The obstacles on the road to true independence are enormous as we heard it: the present parliament, the enriched Communist Party still controlling tremendous resources, the apparatchiks and bureaucracy not in a mood to surrender their privileges and power, and the confused and lethargic populace.

Now, on the positive side of the ledger: There is a coalescing opposition comprised of democratic forces in the parliament, with its leadership having a clear vision of where they want to go. There are national organizations working hard on reawakening national consciousness among the people. The Byelorussians abroad are tuning in more and more to what's going on in the country of their ancestors, and are offering help. (Our BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW is one example.) All of these forces have their work cut out for them. Moscow is still scheming to keep the republics on its leash, working overtime on its Union Treaty. That is certainly one of the reasons why this particular item has been inserted in the declaration.

But Byelorussia is not alone. Most of the Soviet republics seek the same goal — true sovereignty and independence. Moreover, Byelorussia, along with Ukraine, is in the advantageous position of being a member of the United Nations. What Byelorussia should do is to assume there, and in the world, a more active role in international relations. Western governments could, and should, facilitate this process by opening consulates in Miensk, and engaging in cultural-artistic and economic interactions and scholarly exchanges. The United States could add Byelorussia to its Voice of America programming and publish its *Amerika* magazine in Byelorussian.

With the winds of change blowing strong in the creaking empire, we believe there is hope, with God's help, for Byelorussia to become a free and independent country. ■

THOUGHTS and OBSERVATIONS

People's Deputy Hrusavy Makes Comments on Byelorussia's Government

The following is an interview with H. Hrušavy, People's Deputy to the Byelorussian Parliament and Chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front's Committee "Children of Chernobyl." The interview was conducted by BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW editor Joe Price, with coeditor George Stankevich assisting, on August 31, 1990, on the eve of the 19th Convention of Byelorussians of North America held in Cleveland, Ohio.

BR: *You came to the United States with a group of Byelorussians to attend the 19th Convention of Byelorussians of North America to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, September 1-3, 1990.*

Q *Prior to coming here, did you hear about the BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW?*

A To my regret, no. I learned about it right here. And I'm very much interested in your publication.

Q *When and how did you learn about the Convention?*

A Our Byelorussian Popular Front (BPF) Headquarters in Miensk received an invitation from the Byelorussian-American Association.

Q *How big is the group that came from Byelorussia?*

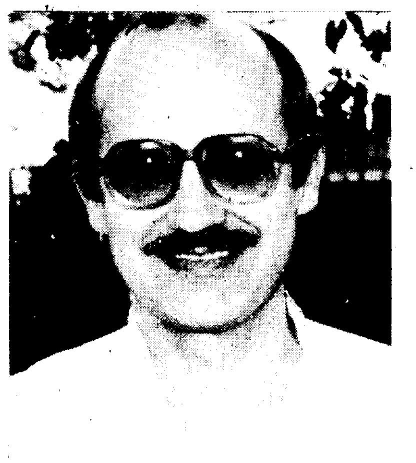
A Pretty sizable — about 40 people.

Q *Please tell us a little about yourself.*

A There is no relationship between me and most of the group. I'm chairman of the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee and also a People's Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament.

Q *Have you experienced any difficulties with your trip here?*

A There have been no political type difficulties. I came here as a legislator.



Hienadź Hrušavy

Q *What is your purpose of coming to the Convention?*

A There are several objectives:

(a) To develop personal contacts with representatives of the Byelorussian emigré groups involved in helping to establish an independent Byelorussian state.

(b) To coordinate the flow of aid for the Chernobyl disaster.

Q *How long are you planning to stay in the United States and what cities would you like to visit?*

A Initially my plan was for 10 days, but now it looks like 14 days. The cities I intend to visit are Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New Brunswick and South River (New Jersey), and New York. There will be no chance this time for me to visit the western part of the United States. I'll do this for sure in the future.

Q *What kind of people would you like to meet with?*

A Active Byelorussian emigrés. Also, it would be very desirable to meet with U.S press and TV representatives and people from the political world. Also, with representatives of those organizations, foundations, companies, and universities willing to help in achieving the full independence of Byelorussia and alleviating the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

Q *What would you like to achieve during this trip?*

A To broaden my contacts with the Byelorussian emigration and the American public, and to get concrete commitments for Chernobyl-related help that I could take back to Byelorussia.

Q *What countries have you already visited and for what purpose?*

A The same purpose as here; I have visited Norway, West Germany, Poland, and the Netherlands. These are the countries that have joined in the Chernobyl aid program.

Q *What other countries would you like to visit and why?*

A We need to expand our contacts. In the near future I'm planning to visit Canada, England and Denmark — there are strong anti-nuclear movements in those countries — also, France. The French government, however, is a strong supporter of nuclear energy. This is why all French institutions have so very little interest in our problems. On the other hand, in Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Italy there are very strong citizens' anti-nuclear movements with great influence on general public opinion. We should establish contacts with them. For example, Greenpeace has invited us to attend an international conference in Vienna. This movement is willing to help us save the people in the radiation-contaminated areas. Still, there are other groups ready to help. Those are human rights groups, women's organizations, and an international medic group.

Q *You are a People's Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament. How did you manage to become a Deputy? What difficulties did you encounter?*

A Entirely by accident. And there were numerous difficulties. It's almost a miracle I've made it to the parliament. Three times there were attempts made to disqualify me as a candidate. Many anonymous reports were filed. If not for help from the press, I would not be allowed to participate in the election campaign. I got 60% of the votes in my election district.

Q *Who else from the democratic bloc won in the first round?*

A Paźniak [BPF chairman], Šuškievic [presently the parliament's first deputy chairman], Viarcinski [chief editor of *Litaratura i Mastactva*] and Hančar.

Q *What is the makeup of the current parliament — Communists/non-Communists, democratic groups/others, BPF?*

A The Communists make up about 80%. About 100 of the deputies (or approximately one-third of the total) belong to the democratic bloc. The BPF deputies constitute the core of the democratic bloc; they formed a political faction in the parliament (for the first time ever in the Byelorussian Soviet Republic). Paźniak is the faction's leader and ideologically it is controlled by the BPF. Not too many BPF candidates were elected (some 18-20 in all). But now there are 35 deputies that make up the faction. This faction operates like a party. It has its own platform, adopts its own programs and makes contact with the outside world.

Q *What language is used to conduct business in the parliament?*

A Russian, I must say with regret — and this is a shame! [**Editor's. Note:** *The BPF and other democratic bloc deputies deliver their statements and speeches in Byelorussian.*]

Q *How would you characterize parliament's work to date?*

A The formation of political forces has taken place; the political positions have been firmed up and the struggle for these positions is in process.

Q *What are the objectives of the democratic faction and the means to achieve them?*

A First the objectives: (1) Free and independent Byelorussian state, (2) Universal national revival, and (3) Recovery from the Chernobyl disaster.

Q *Is there is any hope for a multiparty system in Byelorussia?*

A This is our prime concern and we are fighting to achieve it. This is an ongoing process. In reality there are only two political forces in being; the rest is an amorphous entity of no political significance, with people gravitating to and fro. The BPF opposition parliamentary faction acts as a party and the BPF itself is a movement.

Q *Do you expect the democratic forces to achieve a majority in the parliament?*

A This parliament will not reform itself. The only hope is that it will be disbanded. We expect that events will push it in that direction. Then there will be a possibility for achieving a democratic majority — in one and a half to two years. If this will not take place, the current system will crumble and this will force a certain number of deputies to accept our political position. Most deputies realize they are responsible to the voter (the people). They may be brought before the courts of justice. The awareness of this may bring about the self-termination of the parliament.

Q *What is your view regarding the democratic structure of the government?*

A All this will depend on the removal of the party's monopolistic rights.

Q *Do you see an end to the* **nomenklatura** *and* **partaparat**?

A Optimistically, they will cease to exist within the next two to five years.

Q *What is your opinion, in the national sense, of Dziemianciej [chairman of the Byelorussian parliament]?*

A He is devoid of national consciousness.

Q *Kebich [prime minister]?*

A Kebich has no tie-in with the national culture. He is skilled in economics and stands for economic perestroika. In general, he is a pragmatist without his own views. Regretfully, he is no better than Gorbachev.

Q *Sokolov [first secretary of the Communist Party of Byelorussia]?*

A Sokolov has no solid reputation, no following in the nation. The sooner he leaves the political scene, the better for him personally.

Q *The Byelorussian parliament declared sovereignty on July 27, 1990. What are the main features of this declaration?*

A
- Supremacy of Byelorussian laws; constitution and state authority on the territory of the republic.
- Independent foreign relations.
- Republic has its own citizenship; USSR citizenship not referred to in declaration.
- Byelorussian people are exclusive owners of land, natural resources, mineral wealth and airspace.
- Provides for National Bank, independent financial system, taxes and customs, and right to establish own currency.
- Compensation for Chernobyl's and other ecological damage caused by Union and foreign enterprises.
- Right to own army and security forces, subordinate to Byelorussian Supreme Soviet; republic determines conditions of military service.
- No military troops, bases, armament without republic's approval; non-nuclear zone and neutral state in future.
- Republic appoints General Prosecutor.

Q *What's the declaration's significance for today and the future?*

A The differentiation between **sovereignty** and **independence** came about as a result of politico-linguistic gymnastics. Under normal circumstances,

these terms mean the same thing. **Sovereignty** also means **independence**.

Q *How far is this from the real and full independence of Byelorussia?*

A The declaration doesn't yet mean we have achieved independence. This is only a symbolic act which should not remain symbolic for long. We should write a constitution that would make the pronouncements made in the declaration come true through a system of concrete laws. The main struggle will now be about this point.

Q *What is your view regarding the nationalities' structure of the Soviet Union — a federation, confederation or full independence of the republics?*

A This will depend on how events shape up outside of Byelorussia — within the Soviet Union itself and abroad, and on how fast we will be able to tell our people the truth about who has been responsible for our nation's plight. Today the people's anger has no target and therefore is not creative, not constructive. After disclosure of the truth the question of independence will be resolved. At the beginning of the next century, Byelorussia might become one of the most beautiful countries of the world. We have all the necessary prerequisites.

Q *For Byelorussia, what political and economic system would you consider most appropriate?*

A The political system: Our aim is to model the most tolerant democracy, the U.S. being an example. As to an economic system, this will be very difficult to achieve in a short time. I have no ready prescription for now. First, people should be given an opportunity to work in freedom so that they could be doing what they are capable of and what they desire. Here the state should not interfere ideologically. We should create a free market economy encompassing labor, goods and means of production. People should be free to make their own decisions; otherwise the system of slavery would go on. A free market system is a must. And our economy should gradually phase into the world economic system.

Q *What kind of help would you like to see coming from the outside in order to achieve Byelorussia's political and economic objectives?*

A First of all, to have the opportunity to inform the world about our problems. Right now we do not have such an opportunity for we don't possess independent means of communication with the outside world. The international contacts to find partners for economic ventures are very limited. In this area the Byelorussian emigré groups could be very helpful, especially in the case of the Chernobyl disaster. A good example of this is Rev. Nadson's activity. Through Byelorussian groups outside Byelorussia we have ample opportunity to bring the message forward to the Western world. Through you we could establish contacts with the foreign press media. I came to realize how beneficial you could be in this endeavor.

BR *Thank you very much for your time and sharing your thoughts with us.*

■

EVENTS

International Organization of Scholars on Byelorussia — As reported by *Litaratura i Mastctva* (July 13, 1990), an organizing committee for the International Association of Scholars on Byelorussia was set up in Miensk. The committee includes Adam Maldzis, chairman (Byelorussia), Thomas Bird, deputy chairman (USA), Hienadź Cychun, secretary (Byelorussia), James Dingley (Great Britain), Karl Gutschmidt (Germany), Michal Kondraciuk (Poland), Alaksiej Kaŭka (Russian Federation), plus 12 ordinary members, among them Dr. Vitaŭt Kipel (USA). The committee decided to have a founding convention in Miensk in 1991.

Appeal by Baćkaŭščyna for Unity of all Byelorussians — *Litaratura i Mastactva* (August 10, 1990) published an appeal by the organizing committee of **Baćkaŭščyna. Baćkaŭščyna** is an organization set up in Miensk and headed by Vasil Bykau, the prominent Byelorussian writer and a People's Deputy to the Soviet Union's parliament. The aim of **Baćkaŭščyna** (which is Byelorussian for *Fatherland*) is to "unite Byelorussians in the Soviet Union first, and then the world over, to establish a coordinating center, to conduct work directed toward meeting cultural needs of our compatriots, and to facilitate the spiritual and national revival of the Byelorussian nation [and] the political and economic sovereignty of Byelorussia."

Jaŭhien Lećka, chairman of the organizing committee, listed the following major organizations in Byelorussia which declared their willingness to serve as sponsors of **Baćkaŭščyna**: The Academy of Sciences of the BSSR, Byelorussian State University, Byelorussian Wriers' Union, Byelorussian Language Society, Byelorussian Cultural Fund, Byelorussian Socio-Economic Union "Čarnobyl," Theatrical Arts Institute, Byelorussian Technological Institute, and the publications *Mastackaja Litaratura*, *Bielarus'* and *Litaratura i Mastactva*.

American Exhibit in Bieraście — An exhibit of American books was conducted in Bieraście (Brest), Byelorussia, October 2-13, 1990. According to *Bielarus* (October, 1990), the exhibit was prepared by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA); its theme was the U.S. effort in World War II. The USIA issued and distributed as a souvenir an informational brochure in Byelorussian, entitled "Fight for Freedom." The exhibit comprised 650 books which after the exhibit's conclusion were donated to the city of Bieraście. Mr. Vaclaŭ Mieljanovič, a Byelorussian-American, served as a Byelorussian-speaking guide.

International Conference of Byelorussian Leadership — A conference of Byelorussian political activists from Byelorussia, Poland, Lithuania, France, the United States and Canada was held at Bielavieža and Bielastok (the Bielastok region, Poland) on October 5-8, 1990. According to *Bielarus* (October 1990), about 30 people attended the conference, among them a number of People's Deputies to the Byelorussian parliament and Byelorussian Popular Front (BPF) leadership. The following topics were presented and debated:

- "Road to Byelorussia's Independence" by Zianon Pazniak, BPF chairman
- "Economic and Political Situation in the Bielastok Region" by Viktar Stachviuk, Sakrat Janović and Anton Miranović
- "Policy of Independent Byelorussian Republic and Relations With Its Neighbors" by Aŭhien Miranović, Vincuk Viačorka and Chviedar Niuńka
- "The Role of Churches and Culture in Byelorussian Revival" by Jury Chadyka and Michaś Tkačoŭ
- "The State of Byelorussian Historical Science" by Anatol Hryckievič
- "The Role of Byelorussian Emigration in the Bielastok Region and Overall Byelorussian Revival" by Jan Zaprudnik, Jury Turonak and Sakrat Janovič

To maintain better communications among the diverse groups, an information center was set up to operate in Bielastok. After the conference, the conferees met with local leadership and members of the population at large.

Political Discussions between Miensk and Warsaw (*Bielarus*, October 1990; *Litaratura i Mastactva*, October 19, 1990; *Niva*, October 28, 1990) — At the invitation of the Byelorussian government, the Polish foreign minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski visited Miensk on October 14-16, 1990. Mr. Skubiszewski held useful, but difficult discussions with representatives of the Byelorussian government and of the parliamentary opposition. It was expected that the visit would result in both sides signing a general declaration of mutual friendship and cooperation. However, this did not happen. During negotiations the Byelorussian side refused to recognize the 1945 boundary with Poland, and complained about the present discrimination of the Byelorussian national minority in Poland. The Polish side pointed out the difficulties experienced by Poles in Byelorussia when trying to practice the Catholic religion.

The leader of the Byelorussian parliamentary opposition, Zianon Pazniak, who took part in the negotiations, protested when the Polish foreign minister spoke about the "Polish Church" in Byelorussia. "There is no such thing," said Pazniak. "This church is simply Roman Catholic."

The Byelorussian foreign minister Piotra Kraučanka commented:

"We have agreed that regarding all controversial questions the Byelorussian side will present concrete proposals, which the Polish side will study and provide replies to. The most controversial question results from the situation of our compatriots in the Bielastok region, where very complex processes are taking place.

... Our relations with the Polish side have become good and favorable (for a future agreement). However, it must be understood that we will not give up any of our national interests.

... Regarding the Polish question, the positions and views of our parliamentary opposition almost completely coincide with the positions of the Foreign Ministry."

Byelorussian Protesters Meet Polish Foreign Minister (*Litaratura i Mastactva*, October 19, 1990) — On October 15, 1990, near the Polish consulate in Miensk, the visiting Polish foreign minister met with residents of Miensk, who carried protest signs with the following messages: "We remember Hrabarka"(an Orthodox church and a pilgrimage place for Byelorussians in the Bielastok region, which was recently burned down by Polish extremists); "A priest is a messenger of God, not of a neighboring country;" "Byelorussians are the native people of the Bielastok region;" and "Byelorussians of the Bielastok region, we support you."

The representatives of the Polish consulate promised to bring the protesters' complaints to the attention of the Warsaw government.

CHERNOBYL UPDATE

Journey from Great Britain to Byelorussia with Medical Supplies

by M. Bajarouski

Our journey began on Tuesday, July 24, 1990. We left London in a van donated by Hire & Haulage Co. from Birmingham, loaded with medicine valued at 30,000 British pounds, mostly donated by the very kind British people. Our crew included Fr. A. Nadson, Mr. E. Walsh, my co-driver and myself. The crossing by night from Dover to Ostend was smooth. On entry to Belgium and Germany we had to make duty deposits on the medicine which later were returned upon our leaving the country. At Frankfurt on Oder we all slept in the van. Our next stop was Warsaw, where the hospitality of the Turonak family was truly Byelorussian. Our van was stored overnight with permission from the Ukrainian monastery. The next day we crossed the Byelorussian border at Bierascie (Brest) without any problems. It was lunch time, and we looked for a long time for a place to eat, but without success. From there we travelled to Baranavicy, where we stayed for a night with my relatives.

On Saturday afternoon we reached the suburbs of Miensk, where we were met by Fr. J. Matusievič and a BPF (Byelorussian Popular Front) representative, who guided us to Hotel Bielarus. After registering at the hotel, Prof. Adam Maldzis invited us to his home, where Mrs. Maldzis prepared an excellent meal. On Sunday Fr. Nadson and Fr. Matusievič held a service in Byelorussian at a Catholic Church; the church was crowded.

On Monday, we made the first delivery of medicine to the haematological hospital in Miensk. We were taken there by Hienadz Hrušavy, chairman of the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee. The hospital is run by the very able Dr. Alejnikava, who showed us the hospital and gave us an interview. We were able to see some of the children suffering from leukemia. I wanted to take a photo of a little girl about six years of age. I asked her to smile, but her mother said there is nothing to smile about — which made me feel ashamed.

Tuesday we arrived in Homiel, where we made the next delivery of medical supplies to a local hospital. The next day, Mr. Walsh decided to go on a visit of Chernobyl, where two reactors were still operational. Fr. Nadson, Fr. Matusievič, myself and a reporter from *Homielskaja Prauda* delivered the remainder of the medicine to Chojniki, which is approximately 35 miles from Chernobyl. Here the doctors told us that our mission with medical supplies was the first one from abroad. We also met and talked with local people in the grocer's, fruit and meat stores, who told us that milk, eggs, fruit and meat are produced locally on the land which has been highly contaminated. We have noticed that new buildings were constructed in a region that should have been evacuated.

The next day in Homiel we had the opportunity to see a special hospital for newly born children. Most of the children were badly deformed. Before entering the ward, a doctor warned us that the sight might be disturbing. The sight of these children moved me to tears and I was unable to take pictures of them. There is no scanner at the hospital. These children needed constant attention, and most of them had been abandoned by their mothers. And for those that survive, the future is very bleak.

Hrušavy Thanks Upjohn for Donation of Medicine (*Upjohn Intercom*, October 1990). Mr. Hienadź Hrušavy visited with Upjohn officials in Portage, Michigan, where he met with Corporate Vice President William U. Parfet to thank the company for the $ 4 million donation (more than 60 tons) of medicine, consisting of vitamins, anticancer drugs, antibiotics, corticosteroids and antidiarrheal products. The quantity is "expected to treat 40 thousand children for one year." Mr. Hrušavy was accompanied by Mrs. Maryja Mickievič, a deputy to the Miensk city council, and Mr. Nicholas Prusky of Grand Rapids, Michigan, acting as interpreter.

The delivery was made in June by trucks from Belgium and was seen off by Viktar Baravikoŭ, permanent representative of Byelorussia for international organizations in Vienna.

The article was entitled: "Soviets Say *'Dziakuju!'* for Chernobyl Donation." ■

BYELORUSSIANS VOICE THEIR VIEWS

The Bolsheviks Will Get Along Without You!

(Reprint from *Svaboda*, Oct. 1990)

The Byelorussian Popular Front issued an appeal to Soviet Army conscripts and their parents:

"YOUNG MAN! Are you going to be drafted this fall? Then this appeal is addressed to you.

It is with fear that parents send their children to serve in the Soviet Army. This army crushed the freedom of Hungarian, Czech and Slovak peoples. This army used sharpened shovels to kill women in Tbilisi. This army for 10 years waged an anti-people war in Afghanistan. Moscow needs such an army, but Byelorussia?

Byelorussia paid for Moscow's adventures with the blood of thousands of its fallen sons. That is not enough — now, when remote Soviet republics are consumed with inter-ethnic struggles, our boys are again sent to extinguish these fires.

A movement against service in this army has begun in all republics.

Only Byelorussia is silent. Our Fatherland, which experienced the calamity of Chernobyl, is silent. Peaceful Byelorussia, whose body is filled with Soviet nuclear missile bases, is still silent. It obediently sends tens of thousands of its sons to remote Asian republics to their death or crippledom, to tortures in army barracks. Enough of this!

Byelorussia's Supreme Soviet proclaimed our country a zone of ecological emergency. There is a lack of workers to build housing for those evacuated from the Chernobyl zone. The criminality is growing: our wives, sisters, daughters and girlfriends are not safe. At the same time, our militia suffers a critical shortage of manpower.

The Byelorussian Popular Front **Adradžeńnie** demands that our boys perform their military service only in Byelorussia:

- either in the republican army, which will be organized on the basis of Byelorussia's Declaration of Sovereignty; or

- in the forces maintaining public order; or

- instead of military service, building housing for the Chernobyl victims.

We advise all those who refuse in the Soviet Army to send a telegram with approximately this wording to Byelorussia's Supreme Soviet, addressed to People's Deputy Hrybanau:

"I do not wish to serve foreign interests. I want to serve my own people in my native land. I am ready to build housing for victims of Chernobyl, or to serve in the militia."

Three Tomorrows for Byelorussia

(Reprint from *Svaboda*, Oct. 1990)

1) New Union Treaty (15+1: Republics plus Center). Byelorussia continues to be an object of foreign interests, represented by its puppet government and subordinated to the "strong Center."

2) The Great (Russia), **Little** (Ukraine), **White** (Byelorussia) — Russian (or "Slavic") Alliance, proposed by A. Solzhenitsyn. Byelorussia goes back 100 years in time and again becomes a voiceless periphery of the restored strong Russian empire. Prospects for the future: loss of any kind of identity (we become again the Northwestern Region); suffering and impoverishment.

3) Baltic-Black Sea Alliance (proposed by the Byelorussian Popular Front).

Five republics — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Byelorussia and Ukraine — form their own common market, on the basis of complete equality, which will be integrated into the world economy. This bridge across Europe, controlling the transcontinental pathways, will be a guarantee against any blockades and for a flourishing future. Such an alliance represents a strong gepolitical factor between the reunited Germany and the renewed Russia.

In our history a similar alliance existed for almost five centuries; this was Byelorussia's golden age.

Hrusavy Describes Work of the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee

The BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW interviewed Mr. Hienadź Hrušavy on August 31, 1990. Here are his comments:

Q *You are the chairman of the BPF's "Children of Chernobyl" Committee. What's the purpose of this Committee?*

A To save the children from physical destruction; from the nuclear genocide which is nothing else but a political crime that has been perpetrated and is being perpetrated even right now.

Q *What difficulties does the Committee encounter in its work?*

A The same difficulties any independent democratic organization would experience in a totalitarian system: no money, no technical/administrative support, no means of communication, persecution, lies and accusations of criminal activity. So far I have been issued 12 summonses to appear, two for pending law suits and the others for not appearing at the trials. The summons to appear before a court were issued: (a) for organizing the "Chernobyl Path" demonstration, and (b) for organizing various rallies (not valid any more since I joined the parliament).

Q *Can you describe the Committee's achievements so far?*

A Our achievements have been rather numerous: The Committee's work has been helpful in destroying the government's secrecy, lies and propaganda related to the Chernobyl disaster. Other achievements include:

(1) The "Chernobyl Path" protest rally held in September 1989. 40,000 people participated, including representatives from the Ukraine, with extensive press coverage and thousands of militiamen around to contain it.

(2) Holding the "Chernobyl Assembly of Peoples" meeting in Miensk in November 1989, attended by representatives from seven Soviet republics — the Baltics, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Moldavia, Russian Federation (Bransk and Smalensk regions).

(3) Evacuation of the only home for orphaned children from the radiation danger zone (from Slauhorad).

(4) Arranged for a group of children to be sent to India last year for rehabilitation.

(5) This year 5,000 children were sent to six different countries for medical care and rehabilitation — Poland, East Germany, West Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Norway.

(6) Organized the acquisition and distribution to victims of the Chernobyl disaster of children's food (more than 50,000 kilograms), medicine, vitamins, single-use syringes, and fruit.

(7) With help from Byelorussian scientists, several trips were made to the high radiation zones to verify the level of land and water nuclear contamination.

(8) Established contact with scientific communities in Germany and Norway regarding the acquisition of high quality, modern diagnostic equipment that our government doesn't have and has no desire to have.

(9) In November of this year we're expecting Dr. Longfelder, a radiation specialist from Munich, to visit Miensk.

(10) Facilitated the relocation of people from the radiation regions.

(11) Made arrangements for construction of several brick factories to build shelters for evacuees from the radiation zone.

(12) So far, there is an inadequate quantity of diagnostic equipment to conduct research in hospitals; consequently we have set up several mobile diagnostic centers (initially two vans). We expect help in this from the U.S. and Canada.

Now the difficulties:

(1) The government's disinformation efforts.

(2) Creation of puppet Chernobyl funds with names like ours, confusing the public here and abroad. Contributions to those other "funds" go into government "coffers," with no control or accounting.

(3) Exploitation of our good name and reputation for their own ends. Example: When the Byelorussian emigré dance group "Vasilok" visited Miensk, the billboards read the proceeds from the "Vasilok" performances will go to the *public* commitee "Children of Chernobyl." In reality, our Committee has not received a single kopeck from those events. It is regrettable no contact had been made with the Committee and so we had no part in those activities. Where the contributions went, nobody knows. The BPF Committee "Children of Chernobyl" was established first and has been operating for more than a year all by itself. But the imposter funds receive money and we don't.

Q *What are your Committee's plans fo the future?*

A The most important one is to form within the republic an all-Byelorussian mass organization; also, an international organization to solicit aid and channel it for use in the rehabilitation of Chernobyl disaster victims. This would increase the effectiveness of our work. Presently we have established an international fund in Berlin (European section) and we intend to set up one in America.

■

FRAGMENTS from BYELORUSSIAN HISTORY

DR. FRANCIŠAK SKARYNA — THE FIRST BYELORUSSIAN PRINTER

This year is one of special significance to all Byelorussians. It is the year in which the 500th anniversary of Dr. Francišak Skaryna's birth has been marked with a great fanfare in Byelorussia and abroad. Indeed, UNESCO, a United Nations organization, has dedicated the whole of 1990 to his memory. High government and academic officials from Byelorussia, including Prime Minister Viacaslau Kiebic, Foreign Affairs Minister Piotra Kraučanka and Academician of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences Adam Maldzis, travelled all the way to New York to participate at the United Nations in a special event on September 27 dedicated to Dr. Skaryna. The event was sponsored by the Byelorussian Mission to the United Nations and attracted over 300 people, mostly scholars, politicians and Byelorussian emigrés. Similar Skaryna events were featured at the P.Krečeŭski Foundation in New York, the New York Public Library, New York's Queens College, and Rutgers University in New Jersey.



Photo by J. Price

Francišak Skaryna — Fragment from painting by J. Salavianiuk

Who Was Dr. Skaryna?

The following was reprinted from "Skaryna's Anniversary Year" published by the Byelorussian-American Association.

This year Byelorussians are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Doctor Francišak Skaryna, the first translator and publisher of the Bible (1517-1519) in the Byelorussian language. The impact of Skaryna's work has been profound both on the cultural development of Byelorussia and on the Byelorussian patriotic movement in the 20th century. For it was Francišak Skaryna who wrote in his commentary on the book of Job:

> As animals that roam the deserts know from birth their dens, as birds that soar in the skies are aware of their nests, as fish that swim in the seas and rivers sense their depths, as bees and the like defend their hives, so do people preserve great affection for the place where they were born and brought up in God.

Although the life of Francisak Skaryna is a legitimate subject of scholarly research in Soviet Byelorussia, the republication of Skaryna's historic translation of the Bible is still barred by the Soviet authorities. Since very few copies of the original publication have been preserved, the fruits of Skaryna's labors are virtually unavailable to the people in his own land.

Byelorussian printing owes its beginnings to Dr. Francisak Skaryna, a prominent scholar and humanist. Dr. Skaryna was born into a wealthy merchant family in the old Byelorussian city of Polacak. After attending local schools he studied at Cracow and other universities. He received his degree in liberal arts, and later, at the University of Padua, he received his degree in medicine. He was a true Renaissance man — his intellectual interests embraced theology, literature, linguistics, poetry, art, law, medicine, botany, and printing.

The most important of his achievements was the translation and publication of the **Bible** into the Byelorussian language, first in Prague in 1517-1519, and later in Vilnia. Skaryna's Byelorussian Bible was the second printed in a native Slavonic tongue.

Skaryna's **Traveller's Journal**, which appeared in Vilnia in 1522, is prefaced by meditations on life, poems of a delightful naiveté (the earliest extant Byelorussian poetry) and essays in which Skaryna introduces his readers to geography, history and music. "Reading," he wrote, "is the mirror of our life, the balm of the afflicted."

Like other translators working elsewhere in Europe at that time, he wanted to "make knowledge available to the people in their own language," he said. "I vow it shall become a language of books, and not only of speech." ■

MEDIA WATCH

***Star News,** Pasadena* ("Gorbachev Blasts Exiled Author for Essay on Country's Future," September 9, 1990). We are reprinting excerpts from this article:

"President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, commenting on Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's recently published essay on the future of Russia, said Tuesday that the exiled writer was living 'entirely in the past, the Russia of the old days, the czarist monarchy.'

... Solzhenitsyn, in the piece published last week in the daily Komsomolskaya Pravda, called for resurrection of the great Russian nation that would include Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, as well as a Russified portion of Kazakhstan, and exclude the Soviet Union's other nationalities.

'As a Russian, I fully share concern for the destiny of the Russian people,' Gorbachev said. 'But at the same time, as a Russian, I cannot agree at all with Solzhenitsyn's attitude toward other ethnic groups, which is disrespectful — to be put mildly.' "

***Editor's Note:** See the article "Three Tomorrows for Byelorussia" in our section "BYELORUSSIANS VOICE THEIR VIEWS."*

The Economist ("Religion in Eastern Europe," September 22, 1990). The article reports on religious issues in Poland:

" ... The Orthodox, who number between 500,000 and 1 million and are mostly Byelorussians, have been particularly worried about

discrimination since their main spiritual centre, St. Mary's Church in Grabarka, mysteriously burned to the ground in July."

Los Angeles Times ("Discord Joins the Parade on Soviet Revolution Day," November 8, 1990) reports on events in Byelorussia:

"... Pro- and anti-Communist parades criss-crossed the capital, and arrests and clashes were reported in Moscow, Kiev and Minsk as the Soviet Union marked the 73rd anniversary of the seizure of power by Vladimir I. Lenin and his comrades.

... In Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia, scores of Popular Front militants were repulsed by police as they tried to storm the Lenin monument and cover it with mementos of the Gulag labor camps where multitudes of Soviet political prisoners were once confined, Soviet television reported."

San Francisco Chronicle ("Soviet Cities' Water Supply Poisoned," November 10, 1990)— According to the Chronicle Wire Services "A cyanide leak into a river in the Soviet republics of Byelorussia and Latvia has poisoned water supplies to several cities, officials said yesterday.

The leak into the Daugava River (Dźvina in Byelorussian— *Ed.*), apparently from a chemical weapons plant, occurred sometimes between October 31 and November 5, said authorities in the two republics. They said officials of the plant, which makes chemicals for use in chemical weapons, never told them about the leak."

The Christian Science Monitor (November 19, 1990), describing the Soviet Parliament's stormy discussion of the draft Union Treaty on November 16, reported that " The Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Russia, together accounting for the vast majority of the Union, joined in attacking the central government. Byelorussian Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich [Kiebič] said the Soviet Union only existed de jure, and accused the central government of fostering economic disarray."

The World Today ("Byelorussia awakens," November 19, 1990) — In this article Vera Rich described in some detail the background of the Byelorussian national movement spearheaded by the Byelorussian Popular Front **Adradžennie**. ■

BYELORUSSIANS ABROAD

BYELORUSSIANS OF NORTH AMERICA HOLD THEIR BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Byelorussians of North America gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, September 1-3, 1990, for their 19th biennial convention. In all, over 700 people attended, mostly from the United States. About 100 guests from other countries were present — the largest group, 60 people, from Byelorussia, the second largest, 15, from Poland (the Bielastok region), with others from Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Germany, France, and Great Britain. The group from Byelorussia included Hienadz Hrusavy, People's Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament and chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front's "Children of Chernobyl" Committee; Jury Chadyka, vice chairman of the Byelorussian Popular Front (BPF) **Adradžennie**; the Miensk performing group **Žyvica**; representatives of many organizations from Byelorussia, and some private persons. The group from the Bielastok region included a performing group from the Byelorussian high school in Hajnauka.

The Convention was held in a newly built Byelorussian Cultural Center "Polacak" in Strongsville, a suburb of Cleveland. President Bush sent the Convention his greetings in which he welcomed the people gathered at the Convention and especially those from Byelorussia, expressing his deep feelings for the people in Byelorussia. Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio) was the guest speaker, who also relayed a greeting from the U.S House of Representatives.

She traced the history of the Byelorussian nation from its golden age to decline and then revival, culminating in the declaration of Byelorussian independence on March 25, 1918, and the most recent declaration of sovereignty on July 27, 1990. Congresswoman Oakar expressed her hope that the current situation of confusion and uncertainty will be resolved for the best and that the U.S. play an important role in furthering freedom and democracy in Eastern and Central Europe. "... By extending our hand to those who seek our advice and cooperation we help ourselves." Byelorussia, said Oakar, is facing a very difficult test but is also at the threshold of great opportunity. "... Be assured of my support in Congress," concluded Oakar.

Others addressing the Convention were mayor of Strongsville Walter Ehrnfelt, local dignitaries, BPF vice chairman Jury Chadyka and other guests, and the leaders of various organizations in the United States and Canada. Among the guests present at the Convention was Mr. George

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 29, 1990

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone gathered in Cleveland for the 19th Convention of the Byelorussians of North America. My special welcome goes to your guests from the Soviet Union.

During the past year, as courageous men and women have rekindled the fires of freedom across Eastern Europe, we have witnessed a resurgence of ethnic pride and cultural awareness both in that region of the world and in North America. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and we share a strong sense of kinship with the people of our ancestral homelands. Thus, we proudly cherish the many different customs and traditions that form so great a portion of our cultural heritage.

Celebrating the unique heritage of the Byelorussian people and the many contributions they have made to the United States and Canada, this gathering also underscores our feelings of friendship for those still living in your ancestral homeland. The people of Byelorussia are striving to build anew over the history of communism, and I join you in celebrating their renewed hopes for the future.

Barbara joins me in sending our best wishes for an enjoyable convention. God bless you.

George Bush

President Bush's warm greetings evoked enthusiasm among convention delegates and guests alike

Voinovich, former mayor of Cleveland, now the governor of Ohio and a good friend of Byelorussians. Another prominent guest was Mr. Hienadź Buraŭkin, chief of the permanent Byelorussian Mission at the United Nations. Mr. Buraukin spoke briefly at the opening of the Cultural Center, presenting to the Center portraits of the Byelorussian poets Janka Kupala and Jakub Kolas.

The Convention adopted a 12-point resolution urging Byelorussians abroad to:

(1) Appeal to Western governments and private institutions to provide aid to the Byelorussian victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

(2) Ask the U.S.Congress and Canadian Parliament to set up a quota for admitting immigrants from Byelorussia's radiation-contaminated regions.

(3) Continue support of the Byelorussian Popular Front's activities.

(4) Make effort to build, with funds from the U.S. and Canada, an oncological hospital for treatment of Chernobyl disaster victims.

(5) Facilitate the establishment of economic and trade contacts between Western and Byelorussian private firms.

(6) Support efforts to establish diplomatic relations between the government of Byelorussia and those of the U.S. and Canada.

(7) Encourage tourism and cultural/scientific exchanges between Byelorussia and North America; facilitate arrangements for study by Byelorussian students and various specialists in the U.S. and Canada, including developing private farming skills.

(8) Support the initiatives of the Miensk organizing committee "Backauscyna" to help unite all Byelorussians the world over in their effort to achieve national revival and political and economic sovereignty for Byelorussia.

(9) Support the effort to implement the law that went into effect September 1 on the use of Byelorussian as the state language.

(10) Request the Byelorussian government to stop charging import duties on dosimeters that the Byelorussians receive from their relatives abroad.

(11) Register their opposition to the anti-Byelorussian campaign by the Polish authorities in the Bielastok region and dissatisfaction with the practice of hampering delivery of Byelorussian-language publications in Poland and Byelorussia.

In the last statement (12), the Convention voiced its hope that the democratization process in Byelorussia will be successful in bringing about economic improvement, aiding cultural development of the Byelorussian nation and contribute to peaceful cooperation between Byelorussia on one side and the U.S. and Canada on the other.

The cultural part of the event included performances by the group from the Bielastok region, the **Zyvica** ensemble from Byelorussia, the folk dance group **Vasilok** from the states of New York and New Jersey, and the Byelorussian choir **Vasilki** from Cleveland.

Interviewed by Zora Kipel, member of the Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences in the United States, the guests from abroad said they were impressed with the Byelorussian-Americans' ability to preserve their native Byelorussian language, the large size of the group and its organizational skills, and the depth of their support for the independence movement in Byelorussia.

Editor: *President Bush's statement and Congresswoman Oakar's speech appear on pages 9 and 10, respectively.*



Photo by J. Price

Front's Vice Chairman Chadyka addresses Convention

Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar's Address at the Byelorussian Convention

"Thank you for welcoming me at your Biennial Convention at this beautiful new Byelorussian-American Cultural Center. I feel very much at home here with so many friends like Father Michael Strapko, Pastor of Our Mother of God of Żyrovicy in Cleveland and Assistant Pastor Jakub, as well as John Chanenka, President of the Cleveland Byelorussian-American Association and his lovely wife Lydia. Lydia testified earlier this year at the congressional hearing I chaired in Cleveland on the changes that are transforming Central and Eastern Europe, including Byelorussia. I would also like to extend greetings and a warm welcome to our country and to Ohio to distinguished guests that are here from Byelorussia, including the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences and the Byelorussian State University. It's great to see that the bridges to Byelorussia that Lydia spoke of during her testimony in February are well on their way to becoming a reality.

It is an honor to be here with you at the Byelorussian convention and to participate in the dedication of this wonderful Cultural Center. It is particularly appropriate: the progress that the Byelorussian Community is demonstrating here in Greater Cleveland mirrors the historic changes that are underway in Byelorussia itself. As you all know, the age-old dream of Byelorussian statehood took a major step forward last month when the Byelorussian parliament in Minsk declared sovereignty and announced a program to initiate practical measures toward genuine statehood.

Byelorussia has a rich thousand-year historical tradition, along with a colorful and unique ethnographic and literary heritage. In fact, Byelorussian was the official language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 14th century to nearly the end of the 17th. Tragically, though, Byelorussia has been



Photo by J. Price

Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar addresses Convention

That's the bad news, but there is hope. The people of Byelorussia, along with other peoples in the Soviet Union, are coming to the realization that the solution to their problems must be found at home. By controlling their own economic and political destiny, they can begin the job of cleaning up their environment (and their language) and organizing a more efficient means of getting food and consumer goods to the people. The same process, repeated in the different republics of the Soviet Union, will make it possible for free peoples to work together toward the solution of common problems. It will not be an easy task. There are powerful forces that want to see the Soviet Empire remain intact, regardless of its problems and shortcomings. There can be no going back, however. The establishment of prosperity and the maintenance of peace are dependent on the creative energies of free peoples who set their own priorities and address their own problems.

at the crossroads of history where superior political and military forces from neighboring countries overwhelmed the aspirations of the Byelorussian people for an independent political and cultural existence. For centuries, Byelorussia has had to struggle for its very survival in the face of Polonization and for the past century and a half, with Russification. In fact, the very use of the Byelorussian language was banned in the 1860s as a means of wiping out the national consciousness of the entire nation. Add to that the horrible losses sustained during wars, invasions and a police state terror.

It is a magnificent tribute to the character and will of the Byelorussian people that earlier in this century they were able to overcome generations of cultural and political oppression to organize themselves into a national republic that declared its independence on March 25, 1918 in Minsk. The dedication of that government to the full restoration of the Byelorussian language, along with the revival of the culture and the establishment of political independence, served as a guiding beacon for the next seventy years. Stalinist oppression and the economic stagnation that resulted from a failed economic philosophy have left their mark, but once again Byelorussians are demonstrating how deep the roots of their national consciousness lie. The historic decision of the Byelorussian parliament this summer to restore national sovereignty signifies a bold resolve to stand tall among the world family of nations. Wide use of the national flag and the ancient symbols of Byelorussia is evidence of that. The dedication of this cultural center in Strongsville is evidence of that resolve here in our own part of the world.

Byelorussia today faces many problems. Chernobyl, of course, left a deadly and tragic mark. I note that Mr. Hrushavy, a Deputy to the Byelorussian parliament is among us here. Mr. Hrushavy includes the chairmanship of the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee among his many duties. In addition to the horror of nuclear contamination, Byelorussia also has to cope with industrial emissions and other abuses that have scarred the earth and polluted the skies and waters. Economic inefficiency, bottlenecks and an entrenched bureaucracy produce shortages and hardships.

The United States can play an important role in the emergence of freedom and democracy in Eastern and Central Europe. I've already met with a good number of highly qualified and dedicated public servants from that part of the world. They all want American and Western help and assistance in establishing market economies and developing cultural, commercial and political contacts. By extending our hand to those who seek our advice and our cooperation, we help ourselves. We open markets and we open our minds to new points of view. The process of renewal in Central and Eastern Europe is just beginning, but we are already working toward positive contacts and meaningful cooperation.

The world is changing rapidly. Those of you who are here have contributed significantly toward these changes. There are delegates here from more than a dozen different states and provinces in North America and ten different countries. It is my firm belief that the wave of freedom and self-determination that we are witnessing today throughout Central and Eastern Europe was set in motion to a large degree by the dedicated and tireless efforts of organizations like your own throughout the four corners of the world. You spoke out for basic freedoms and fundamental principles when others were unable to do so. Your annual Independence Day commemorations, your weekly prayers at church and the countless letters and phone calls to public officials helped to create a political and philosophical environment that made the Sovereignty Declaration in Minsk this past summer an idea whose time has come; an idea that could not be suppressed any longer.

By building on the heritage of your ancestors and reminding the world of the truth about your history, you helped to lay the foundation for a new reality in Byelorussia. Byelorussia confronts formidable challenges. She also stands on the threshold of exciting possibilities. I wish all of you continued success and best wishes as you and so many others in the world work toward a better future for your people and for all of God's children. You are sure to have my support in Congress. Thank you for your attention.

■

Appeal by "Children of Chernobyl" Committee

Dear Friends,

We are deeply moved by your attention and sympathy towards the victims of Chernobyl catastrophe. We are doomed — 70 per cent of Chernobyl radiation fell out in Byelorussia. Almost half of its territory was contaminated with radionuclides. Over three million people (one-third of the total population of Byelorussia) are still living in the contaminated zone. For the fifth year already the whole population of Byelorussia has to eat bread, meat and milk produced on the contaminated soil. And as a result, the level of children's diseases today has gone up three or four times. We lack medicine, medical equipment, pure dietary food, baby food, vitamins. People are being evacuated from the dangerous regions so slowly that they in fact are losing health and hope for a normal life.

The state has neither currency nor frankness nor compassion for its people. The threat of extermination is materializing for the Byelorussian nation! Our children are having fewer and fewer chances for the future!

And for their salvation the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee has been set up and is functioning. It's a public organization, independent of official state structures, formed a year and a half ago on the initiative of the Byelorussian Popular Front.

Acting against the will of the authorities, the organization was first to break the information blockade around our grief, to destroy the plot of silence imposed from above. It tried to reveal to the whole world the real scale of the tragedy.

We've held meetings, organized a multi-thousand-strong Chernobyl march with the participation of inhabitants from the contaminated zone, conducted the Chernobyl Assembly of Peoples in the capital of Byelorussia, Miensk. We have helped to send hundreds of children to other countries for rehabilitation and treatment and to move a children's home out of the contaminated area. We have supplied hospitals in the dangerous zone with tons of medicine and children's dietary food.

From the very start, the official authorities persecuted the Committee, imposing fines on it and even tried to sue its chairman in their attempts to veil the truth. But common people appreciated our efforts and elected the chairman of the "Children of Chernobyl" Committee to the republic's Supreme Soviet. People follow and support us despite lies and disinformation. Now the Committee unites doctors, teachers, scientists, journalists, clergymen, youth. We seek sponsors and volunteers all over the world to take part in the salvation of our children.

The organization today has an opportunity to accept all the necessary aid and deliver it to the contaminated areas. We have succeeded in arranging treatment and vacation of children outside Byelorussia, in different countries ready to take them on. We regularly invite representatives of humanitarian, religious, scientific organizations and groups to Miensk to inform them of the state of things. We are grateful to them for their charity.

The help we need most of all is medicine and medical equipment, pure food for children, invitation for their treatment and rehabilitation, financial support to migrants, participation in construction of new hospitals and children's health centers. We would appreciate any other form of aid to save and protect our children!

A firm guarantee of delivery of goods to the victims of Chernobyl and of fair use of funds is the fact that there are affiliated societies of our Committee in almost all the areas of the Chernobyl zone. Our Committee is an organization of people's self-salvation to which the inhabitants of the dangerous territories make a tangible contribution. Absolute openness, selfless work, public control — these are the principles of our activity. We are guided by humanism and mercy towards the victims of Chernobyl with whom we share their lot.

If you share our views and principles, if you wish to help us, if you want your charity to reach the suffering people, we are all for cooperating with you. We are prepared to provide you with the documents, videofilms about the situation in Byelorussia, information on where your aid is spent and on its results, on the reaction of the victims of Chernobyl to it. We are also ready to receive the members of your organization and to send you official invitations.

Our address: Grushevoy, G.V.
47/89 Pushkin Avenue, Minsk
USSR/BSSR, 220082.
Tel.: 550113
Fax: 550113

Sincerely yours,
H. Hrušavy (Grushevoy)

MARKING SKARYNA'S 500TH BIRTHDAY ABROAD

Bielarus (October 1990) reported that cultural events marking the 500th anniversary of Dr. Francisak Skaryna's birth were featured at the United Nations in New York, the P. Kreceuski Foundation in New York, the New York Public Library, New York's Queens College, and Rutgers University of New Jersey.

At the United Nations, the Skaryna event was observed on September 25. It was hosted by the Byelorussian Permanent Mission at the United Nations and attracted over 300 people, mostly scholars, politicians and Byelorussian emigrés from New York and the state of New Jersey. Among the dignitaries from Byelorussia were Prime Minister Kiebič, Foreign Affairs Minister Piotra Kraŭčanka, and Academician of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, Adam Maldzis. Also present was Dr. Stanley Skaryna of Montreal, Canada, a distant relative of Dr. Francišak Skaryna. Minister Kraŭčanka noted in his talk that the event "marks in a certain way the beginning of a new relationship between the American public and our national emigration." He briefed the audience on other Skaryna events that were planned or have already been held in Byelorussia, America, Paris, Cracow and Padua. Academician Adam Maldzis, a recent recipient of the Skaryna Medal, spoke of Skaryna's contributions and Dr. Stanley Skaryna shared his experiences from the Skaryna events observed in Byelorussia that he recently attended.

The Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences in the United States hosted a meeting with Academician Maldzis at the P. Krečeŭski Foundation in New York on September 29. Attending were local Byelorussian-Americans, many of them of the younger generation. Among the guests was Hienadz Buraukin, chief of the Byelorussian U.N. Mission in New York. Opening the meeting, Dr. Vitaŭt Kipel, the Institute's president, told of the many meetings in the past with representatives of Soviet Byelorussia and noted the relaxed character of present meetings. Dr. Maldzis had a talk describing the long path initiated by Skaryna and followed by others — Kastus Kalinoŭski, Maksim Bahdanovič, and Janka Kupala, and the literary giants of the modern era — Uladzimier Karatkievič and Vasil Bykaŭ.

The New York Public Library marked the event on October 3. Attending were Mr. Paul Fasana, the Library's director, the Library's senior staff, leaders of Byelorussian-American organizations and Byelorussia's representatives: Foreign Affairs Minister Kraŭčanka, Prof. Maldzis, Deputy Chief of the Byelorussian UN Mission, Aleh Paškievič and Mrs. Julia Euraukin, wife of Mr. Hienadz Buraukin, chief of the Byelorusian U.N. Mission, temporarily in Byelorussia. Mr. Fasana opened the observance noting that the Library had observed Skaryna's anniversaries in the past. The head of the Slavic Department, Eduard Kasinec, said that the Library boasts one of the most extensive collection of works on Skaryna in the Western world. Mrs. Zora Kipel, assistant head of the department, told about the efforts to expand the Byelorussian collection, which presently numbers about 7,000 books in Byelorussian. Academician Maldzis gave a briefing on Skaryna events in Byelorussia and donated some literature on Skaryna. Minister Kraŭčanka described the evolution of Skaryniana in Byelorussia, making the point that currently Byelorussian scholars make good use of Western research on Skaryna, including that by Byelorussian emigré scholars. Minister Kraŭčanka and Mrs. Buraŭkin presented some gifts for the Library.

Queens College hosted the event on October 10, with Professor Thomas Bird doing the honors. The guests included a delegation from the United Nations, Foreign Affairs Minister Kraŭčanka, Mrs. Julia Buraŭkin, Prof. Maldzis, members of the Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences in the United States, local Byelorussian-Americans and Queens College students. Kraŭčanka and Maldzis spoke on topics related to the anniversary. Later there were informal talks on closer cooperation between Byelorussian-culture scholars from Byelorussia and those abroad. Mr. Kraŭčanka invited Byelorussian-Americans to visit the Byelorussian UN mission in an effort to explore developing further contacts and ways for cooperation.

Rutgers University marked the event on October 12. It was sponsored jointly by the Association of Rutgers Alumnae and the Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences in the United States, and chaired by Mrs. Halina Rusak. Prof. Maldzis spoke on the "Research Work on the Famous Polacak Resident and the Skaryna Anniversary in the BSSR." Professor Maldzis also told of a plan to build a Skaryna center in Miensk that will conduct research on Skaryna as well as other fields in Byelorussian culture. ■

LETTERS

Thank you for sending me your most recent issue of the Byelorussian Review. I appreciate your taking the time to keep me informed of developments in this area.

The world is witnessing a remarkable revolution within the Soviet empire, one which I hope will lead to freedom and genuine self-determination for Byelorussia. While I share your concern that the situation in Byelorussia is not receiving the media coverage it deserves, nonetheless, I am greatly encouraged by recent developments and believe strongly that the future is full of hope for the Byelorussian people.

Dana Rohrabacher
Member
U.S. House of Representatives

The article by J. Kreuski on our national name was very enlightening. I think that a great majority of your readers (those who were not educated in a Byelorussian school abroad) would benefit greatly from a series of articles on Byelorussian history in general and on some appropriate significant events or individuals in particular. Looking forward to the next issue.

W. Karakulka
Texas

Editor's Note: *Thanks for the suggestion. We liked it so much that we created a new section, "FRAGMENTS FROM BYELORUSSIAN HISTORY" (see page 8).*

An article, entitled "Soviet makes friends during cancer treatment," appeared in one of the local papers (*The Ann Arbor News*, August 2, 1990) on the arrival and stay of two people from Byelorussia. The gentleman, Alexander "Sasha" Goncharow, was accompanied by his sister, Alla Kamoska. They came to Ann Arbor seeking medical treatment for Sasha's tumor.

During their entire stay, which lasted close to two months, they were welcomed into our homes and watched over by several people of our Detroit Byelorussian community. My father, Dr. Joseph Sazyč, took a dedicated interest in them. During the week he made several trips to Ann Arbor, over 100 miles each trip. On weekends, when Sasha wasn't receiving any treatments, he and his family stayed with one of our families. However, when the press arrived at a farewell party given by one of the nurses, they spoke very briefly with our community members and made absolutely no mention in their article about them nor did they present accurate facts regarding their country of origin.

We felt we couldn't let this go unanswered so we wrote to the newspaper. Here are a few excerpts from my letter:

... First and foremost, Alexander Goncharow and his sister Alla Kamoska are both not just "Soviet" but are both Byelorussian and reside in the Republic of Byelorussia. Byelorussia is a republic of 10 million strong and has a seat in the United Nations. You refer to Sasha, as his friends call him, residing in a city (not village) called Borisov "1,000 miles from Moscow." First of all, Moscow is not located in Byelorussia, but the capital city of Miensk is. Borisov is only 50 miles from Byelorusia's capital city Miensk (Minsk). Why Moscow as a reference point? If the reporters and public are unaware of the individual republics and their capitals that is not reason enough to miseducate and misinform them by clustering and grouping all peoples of the Soviet Union as "Soviets or Russians" with Moscow as the only and main geographic reference point. After all, it is the job of reporters to bring the facts to the public.

... The news media fails to study the true facts, and because of this sad truth the Byelorussian people are seldom recognized and often overlooked. However, only through our determination and the education and research by your staff and others like you, will this change. Hence this correspondence.

Helena J. Timmerman
Detroit

I am looking forward as always to your next publication. My professor of Soviet politics, Dr. Miller of Wayne State University, finds your publication very educational and interesting. He had no idea of the strength of our Byelorussian-American community.

I visited Byelorussia in May and June of this past summer. I witnessed and participated in many of their demonstrations taking place in Miensk and was fortunate enough to bring back pictures. I will forward a few of these pictures as well as a short commentary on my stay as soon as I can.

Helena J. Timmerman
Detroit

I would like to express my sincere thanks for your kind letter and for the No. 2 issue of BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW. I'm especially grateful for your publishing of my letters to you.

As I promised before, I intend to send you regularly material on Byelorussia's cultural life where it relates to and mutually interacts with cultures of other countries. I'm currently involved in writing on the Skaryna anniversary and on the founding of the "Backaŭščyna" organization — a task delayed somewhat by my urgent trip to Germany.

To my great regret, I have not yet received BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW issues # 1-2, 3, and 4-5. To clarify the situation, please contact:

107140, Moscow, Komsomolskaya pl. I-a
International Post Office, U.S.S.R.

I still would like to receive those issues. I need some of the material for my work on the "Byelorussian Literature in the USA: Acceptance and Interpretation."

I have to leave in a hurry for Berlin to be present at the historic event of German reunification. In addition, I intend to take part in the work of the Slavists at the German Free University and at the same time to publish there a bibliography on German-Byelorussian literary relations.

U. Sakalouski
Miensk, Byelorussia.

Editor's Note: *Rather than write to the Moscow International Post Office — and wait forever for their reply — we solved the problem the American way: We sent you the* ***undelivered*** *issues by* ***registered air mail.*** *Although this is costly, we hope you get the issues in time to use them in your work.*

I was so lucky when I happened to come across your newsletter in my mail box. Thank you ever so much!

At last I've got the possibility to receive objective information about the life of Byelorussians in the States. So I'm sure the importance of your work is known. Because only together we'd be able to survive and create a new independent state — Republic of Byelorussia. And you help us and Byelorussians in America to get to know each other well, to free ourselves from the stereotypes of Bolshevist ideology. Even five years ago I could not imagine the possibility of corresponding with Byelorussian emigrés. We thought all of you were either American spies or "traitors of Byelorussian people." But nowadays I can't help but see how much you do for Byelorussia. Thank you! Though the revival remains a very distant dream, let's hope for the best. And may God help it become a reality!

And now I'd like to share my opinion about your newsletter.

First of all I want to draw attention to the article "Our National Name in Foreign Languages" in section "THOUGHTS and OBSERVATIONS" by J. Kreŭski. I found it very interesting. I got to know many things I hadn't known before. I also liked the sections "BYELORUSSIANS VOICE THEIR VIEWS," "MEDIA WATCH," and "BYELORUSSIANS ABROAD".

If you find it possible, please write to me about how the American Byelorussians react to your bulletin. Are they in the habit of reading it?

So I'm looking forward to your next newsletter and hope to continue my pen-ties with you.

S.K.
City of N., Byelorussia

Editor's Note: *Comments on BYELORUSSIAN REVIEW — all positive — were included in issues preceding Vol. 2, No. 2.*

■

BR
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*Рэпрынт "Byelorussian review" выдадзены коштам Беларускае газэты "СВАБОДА" з дазволу рэдакцыі бюлетэня. МАЎ друкарня, наклад 1000 асобнікаў. Кошт 1 рубель. Выкладчыкам ангельскае мовы, для выкарыстаньня на занятках, дасылаецца за 25% ад кошту бюлетэня.
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